Miscellanea.

Cowes, Isle of Wight.—Osborne House, the seat of Lady Isabella Blackford, has been taken for her Majesty, with an option to purchase, if approved of. The royal household are expected down in May, but considerable additions must be made to the building before it can accommodate a very large establishment. It is beautifully situate in a fine park, with abundance of noble timber. The views are extensive and of varied beauty, though certainly not equal to Norris Castle, which commands Southampton water and the roadstead of Cowes, while Osborne takes a more easterly view, taking in Portsmouth, Spithead, &c., but is shut out by the high grounds of Norris from the views westward. The mansion has, on the ground-floor, drawing-room, dining-room, and library, with two ante rooms and hall. First-floor.—Five bed-rooms and two dressing-rooms. Second-floor.—Nine rooms. Offices, housekeepers'-rooms, servants'-hall, laundry, kitchen, with beds for maidservants; three beds for men over the stables. There is plenty of extra accommodation to be had in the neighbourhood. When the Duchess of Kent had Norris, Osborne Villa and another house or two were taken for Sir John Conroy and other parts of the establishment. There are also ten new villas nearly finished in East Cowes-park. Osborne-park and wood, with gardens, &c., contain 346 acres, the whole of which is freehold. The farm adjoining is copyhold, and contains 424 acres. The park runs down to the water. The landing and bathing is good, and strictly private. It joins the grounds of Norris, being directly to the south-east of that estate.—*Sun.*

Cheltenham Improvements. — The western entrance to this town, which has up to this time profited but little by the large sums expended in buildings in our vicinity, is about to share in the erection of additional houses. A large and elevated piece of ground, purchased at the sale of the Milldway estate, by gentlemen connected with the railway company, is now being laid out for building purposes, and, we hear, is to be designated Primrose-hill. A bridge across the river, in connection with the road upon which the land above alluded to abuts, would open a most desirable communication with Writtle, and tend materially to enhance the value of property on both sides of the water.

The Fortifications of Paris.—The *Reforme* of the 6th inst. states that orders have been given to complete the works of the fortification of Paris as quickly as possible. The troops of the garrison are to be employed for that purpose, and a number of labourers have been sent from the departments to assist. Several detachments of labourers had likewise arrived at Paris from Germany and Belgium.

His Royal Highness Prince Albert presided on the 8th inst. at a meeting of the Commission for promoting and encouraging the Fine Arts in the rebuilding the Palace of Westminster.

St. James's Palace.—The noble suite of apartments forming the state-rooms of St. James's Palace have been completely and splendidly furnished and embellished. The appearance of the the throne-room is truly magnificent. The hangings of the throne are composed of rich crimson silk velvet, superbly embroidered, and decorated with gold lace. The window-curtains and draperies in the Queen's closet and the throne-room are made of *tissu de verre*, a splendid damask, recently invented. The draperies are very tastefully designed, and arranged and interspersed with crimson velvet. The seats are covered with crimson velvet, and trimmed with gold lace. The throne, the throne-chair, and stool, and all the richly carved window-cornices, mouldings, picture and glass frames, the pier tables, sofas, and chairs, and the general furniture, have been newly gilt. The floors throughout the state apartments are covered with carpets of the Wilton manufacture, having the arms of England appropriately placed at their corners.

Mr. Taplin, who has recently been appointed to the chief direction of the engineers' department of Portsmouth dockyard, with an increase of salary, has invented an ingenious machine for testing the strength of canvas (it is an improvement on the one for testing the strength of wire-rope), and the Admiralty have directed that all which is received into store shall be tried. The machine can produce a strain of 600 lbs. weight, and scarcely any ship of canvas can bear a strain of more than 500 lbs. The machine is something in principle resembling steelyards. The contractor who undertook to clear the mast-pond in the dock-yard has concluded his work. Several thousand tons of soil and rubbish have been removed to the Government ground at Hasler. Mr. Holte, who has taken the contract for excavating at the north end of the yard, has four rails on which the carts travel to the lighters which receive the rubbish he removes, and he has a steam-tug to tow them away when full to the Ordnance ground, near Priddy's Hard.

In consequence of a recent reduction of tonnage on tiles and quarries of every description passing along the line of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, the markets for these articles at Stourport, Worcester, Gloucester, Bristol, and all intermediate places on the Severn and in South Wales, are become accessible.—*Worcester Journal.*

Duty on Paper.—The publishers of Edinburgh have, within these few days, despatched a petition to the House of Commons, praying for the removal of the excise duties on paper; and we understand that the principal paper-makers in Mid Lothian have prepared and sent off a petition of similar import.—*Witness.*

In the United Kingdom, a sum of upwards of 20,000,000*l.* is annually expended in the consumption of gas; and, in London alone, the sum paid to the several gas companies has exceeded 3,000,000*l.* annually.

Devon.—Fossil Remains.—The workmen lately employed in the brick-field, in Barbican-lane, Barnstaple, while at work, excavating the clay at a depth of fifteen or sixteen feet below the surface, struck upon a hard substance, which was at first taken for the trunk of a small tree petrified, but, on examination proved to be the tusk of a fossil elephant, or horn of some other antediluvian animal. When it was first hit upon, the workmen unfortunately split it in pieces with their pick-axes in attempting to get it up; and, on leaving the field for dinner, shortly after, some boys who were near, completed the work of destruction, and carried away a great portion of it in fragments; but, on its being made known to the proprietor of the field, Mr. E. R. Roberts, a more diligent search was made, and the remainder of the tusk traced, and taken up. It was lying on the lower gravel bed, with a superincumbent stratum of four or five feet of the blue clay, above which is about six feet of the yellow plastic clay, with several feet of coarse gravel and soil above. The tusk must have been of large dimensions, about eighteen inches in circumference, and from four to seven feet in length. It has the shape, grain, and markings of ivory, but the colour and consistence are those of horn, and it retains a considerable degree of elasticity. The fragments, which are in the possession of a gentleman in this town, weigh more than 20lb.; and it is supposed that more than that quantity besides was carried away in the first instance, which is to be regretted, as, if attention had been rallied to it before it was destroyed, it might have been taken up entire. This is, we believe, almost the only instance of antediluvian animal remains having been found in this neighbourhood. Nothing else has been discovered in the brick-field; and from the nature of the ground, great difficulty would be experienced in continuing the search, as immediately on reaching the gravel beneath, the water comes up, and stops all progress, and the clay is consequently not worked to the bottom of the bed.—*West Briton.*

Bells in France.—The Archbishop of Bordeaux has published a long and interesting pastoral letter on church bells, from which we extract the following passage:—"There is a diocese in France, that of Belley, in which upwards of 200 steeples have been rebuilt or newly constructed, and provided with bells of all sizes; there is not a village in Lorraine that has not recovered its former peal of bells, and in the towers of the cathedrals of Paris, Lyons, Rheims, Poitiers, Strasbourg, Nancy, Rouen, Amiens, Sens, and Vendôme are still to be seen the celebrated *bourdons* which added so much to their renown. The steeples of the cathedrals of Nantes, Chartres, and Rodez have been lately furnished with peals of bells far superior to those of which they had been despoiled. One of the new bells of Rodez weighs 17,000lb., and that about to be cast for Notre Dame de la Garde, of Marseilles, will weigh 22,000lb.

A BILL FOR BETTER REGULATING THE BUILDINGS OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS, AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE DRAINAGE THEREOF.

Prepared and brought in by the Earl of Lincoln and Sir James Graham.)

[Note.—The words printed in Italics in the body of the Clauses, are proposed to be inserted in the Committee.]

Whereas by the several Acts mentioned in Schedule (A.) to this Act annexed, provisions are made for regulating the construction of buildings in the metropolis, and the neighbourhood thereof, within certain limits therein set forth: but forasmuch as buildings have since been extended in nearly continuous lines or streets far beyond such limits, so that they do not now include all the places to which the provisions of such Acts, according to the purposes thereof, ought to apply; and moreover such provisions require alteration and amendment; it is expedient to extend such limits, and otherwise to amend such Acts.

And forasmuch as in many parts of the metropolis and the neighbourhood thereof the drainage of the houses is so imperfect as to endanger the health of the inhabitants, it is expedient to make provision for facilitating and promoting the improvement of such drainage.

And forasmuch as by reason of the narrowness of streets, lanes, and alleys, and the want of a thoroughfare in many places, the due ventilation of crowded neighbourhoods is often impeded, and the health of the inhabitants thereby endangered, and from the close contiguity of the opposite houses, the risk of accident by fire is extended; it is expedient to make provision with regard to the streets and other ways of the metropolis, for securing a sufficient width thereof.

And forasmuch as many buildings and parts of buildings unfit for dwellings are used for that purpose, and other buildings fit for dwellings are improperly used, whereby disease is fostered and propagated; it is expedient to discourage and prohibit such use thereof.

And forasmuch as by the carrying on in populous neighbourhoods of certain works, in which materials of an explosive or inflammable kind are used, the risk of accidents arising from such works is much increased; it is expedient to regulate, not only the construction of the buildings in which such dangerous works are carried on, but also to provide for the same being carried on in buildings at safe distances from other buildings which are used either for habitation or for trade in populous neighbourhoods.

CRITICAL NOTES

BY

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The *literal* signification of the words "*buildings unfit for dwellings are used for that purpose*" is not very clear: the sense would be more apparent if the words can "*buildings unfit for the purposes of human habitation are used as human dwelling-houses.*"

The words "*it is expedient to make provision for the adoption of all such expedients*" require alteration.